

REMARKS

I. Introduction

In response to the Office Action dated August 1, 2006, Applicants have amended claim 1 to further clarify the present invention. Support for the amendment to claim 1 may be found, for example, in the Example on page 10 of the specification. No new matter has been added.

A Request for Continuing Examination is being filed concurrently with this Amendment.

Applicants appreciate the granting of an interview on October 11, 2006 with the Examiner, during which differences between the present invention and the prior art and proposed amendments to the claims were discussed.

For the reasons set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are patentable over the cited prior art references.

II. The Rejection Of Claims 1 And 3-5 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 and 3-5 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 63020487 (the '487 reference). Applicant respectfully submits that the '487 reference fails to anticipate the pending claims for at least the following reasons.

With regard to the present invention, amended claim 1 recites a method for producing conductive particles comprising the steps of: introducing a solution composed mainly of palladium chloride and hydrochloric acid into an electroless plating bath containing a reducing agent, and one from the group consisting of particles of an organic material or particles of an inorganic material while stirring said bath; and simultaneously applying an electroless plating to the surface of said particles and allowing the palladium catalyst to be carried on the surface of

said particles to give conductive particles having an electroless plate coating, wherein said electroless plate coating comprises at least one selected from the group consisting of Ni, Ni-P, Ni-B, Cu, an Ni-PTFE composite coating and a Cu-PTFE composite coating.

As the claim indicates, the electroless plating bath contains a reducing agent at the time the solution composed mainly of palladium chloride and hydrochloric acid is introduced to the bath.

In contrast to the claimed invention, the '487 reference discloses that a hydrazine reducing agent is added after the palladium chloride and hydrochloric acid are added to the bath. As is recited in the Abstract of the '487 reference, mica particles are suspended in an HCl/SnCl and/or PdCl solution, stirred and filtered to finish pretreatment of the particle surfaces, then the wet cake is suspended in an aqueous solution containing a water soluble nickel salt and a complexing agent. Following this step, the suspension is stirred and NaOH is added to maintain a high pH. Only then, *after these steps*, is hydrazine reducing agent added to the solution. Thus, it is clear that the '487 reference does not teach or suggest a step of introducing a solution composed mainly of palladium chloride and hydrochloric acid into an electroless plating bath containing a reducing agent.

The claim also indicates that the plating is applied to the surface of the particles and the palladium catalyst is carried on the surface of the particles simultaneously with the stirring step.

However, in the '487 reference, the plating step is performed after the pretreatment steps. The step of stirring the suspension of HCl, palladium chloride and mica particles is a pretreatment step or catalyst activation step. Only after the wet cake obtained from the catalyst activation step is introduced into a plating bath is the plating performed.

The Examiner alleged in the interview that because the cake is wet, there is still solution containing hydrochloric acid and palladium chloride present when it is added to the aqueous solution containing the nickel salt. Accordingly, she alleges that this reads upon the limitation of claim 1 of introducing a *solution* composed mainly of palladium chloride and hydrochloric acid into an electroless plating bath containing particles of an organic material or an inorganic material while stirring said bath. However, in the '487 reference, the palladium catalyst is already carried on the mica particles before the plating step. Thus, even if the solution containing palladium chloride remains in the wet cake, it is merely residue from the pretreatment step, and accordingly, the palladium chloride was not carried on the particles, and does not contribute to the plating itself. Accordingly, the step of simultaneously applying an electroless plating to the surface of said particles and allowing the palladium catalyst to be carried on the surface of said particles to give conductive particles having an electroless plate coating does not occur in the '487 reference.

As such, in view of the above comments, Applicants submit that the '487 reference fails to teach or suggest a step of introducing a solution composed mainly of palladium chloride and hydrochloric acid into an electroless plating bath containing a reducing agent, or a step of simultaneously applying an electroless plating to the surface of said particles and allowing the palladium catalyst to be carried on the surface of said particles to give conductive particles having an electroless plate coating.

Anticipation under 35 U.S.C. § 102 requires that each and every element of the claim be disclosed, either expressly or inherently in a prior art reference, *Akzo N.V. v. U.S. Int'l Trade Commission*, 808 F.2d 1471 (Fed. Cir. 1986), and the '487 reference does not disclose the claim elements noted above. Therefore, as it is apparent from the foregoing that the '487 reference

fails to anticipate claim 1 or any dependent claims thereon, the Applicant respectfully requests that the § 102 rejection be traversed.

III. All Dependent Claims Are Allowable Because The Independent Claim From Which They Depend Is Allowable

Under Federal Circuit guidelines, a dependent claim is nonobvious if the independent claim upon which it depends is allowable because all the limitations of the independent claim are contained in the dependent claims, *Hartness International Inc. v. Simplimatic Engineering Co.*, 819 F.2d at 1100, 1108 (Fed. Cir. 1987). Accordingly, as claim 1 is patentable for the reasons set forth above, it is respectfully submitted that all pending dependent claims are also in condition for allowance.

IV. Conclusion

Having responded to all open issues set forth in the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that all claims are in condition for allowance.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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